

**Additional file 4: List of items required when reporting a realist synthesis (RAMESES checklist)**

Reporting item	Description of item	Reported on page(s)
Title		
1	In the title, identify the document as a realist synthesis or review	Page 1
Abstract		
2	While acknowledging publication requirements and house style, abstracts should ideally contain brief details of: the study's background, review question or objectives; search strategy; methods of selection, appraisal, analysis and synthesis of sources; main results; and implications for practice	Page 2
Introduction		
3	<b>Rationale for review</b> Explain why the review is needed and what it is likely to contribute to existing understanding of the topic area	Pages 4-6
4	<b>Objectives and focus of review</b> State the objective(s) of the review and/or the review question(s). Define and provide a rationale for the focus of the review	Pages 6-7
Methods		
5	<b>Changes in the review process</b> Any changes made to the review process that was initially planned should be briefly described and justified	Pages 6-7
6	<b>Rationale for using realist synthesis</b> Explain why realist synthesis was considered the most appropriate method to use	Page 6
7	<b>Scoping the literature</b> Describe and justify the initial process of exploratory scoping of the literature	Page 7
8	<b>Searching processes</b> While considering specific requirements of the journal or other publication outlet, state and provide a rationale for how the iterative searching was done. Provide details on all of the sources accessed for information in the review. Where searching in electronic databases has taken place, the details should include, for example, name of database, search terms, dates of coverage and date last searched. If individuals familiar with the relevant literature and/or topic area were contacted, indicate how they were identified and selected	Pages 7-9, Supplementary materials 1 and 3
9	<b>Selection and appraisal of documents</b> Explain how judgements were made about including and excluding data from documents, and justify these	Pages 8-9, Supplementary materials 1 and 3
10	<b>Data extraction</b> Describe and explain which data or information were extracted from the included documents and justify this selection	Page 9

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11	<b>Analysis and synthesis processes</b>	Describe the analysis and synthesis processes in detail. This section should include information on the constructs analysed and describe the analytic process	Page 9
Results			
12	<b>Document flow diagram</b>	Provide details on the number of documents assessed for eligibility and included in the review, with reasons for exclusion at each stage, as well as an indication of their source of origin (e.g. from searching databases, reference lists and so on). You may consider using the example templates (which are likely to need modification to suit the data) that are provided	Page 8, Figure 1
13	<b>Document characteristics</b>	Provide information on the characteristics of the documents included in the review	Pages 9-10, Supplementary file 2
14	<b>Main findings</b>	Present the key findings with a specific focus on theory building and testing	Pages 10-14
Discussion			
15	<b>Summary of findings</b>	Summarise the main findings, taking into account the reviews objective(s), research question(s), focus and intended audience(s)	Pages 14-17
16	<b>Strengths, limitations and future research directions</b>	Discuss both the strengths of the review and its limitations. These should include (but need not be restricted to) (a) consideration of all the steps in the review process and (b) comment on the overall strength of evidence supporting the explanatory insights which emerged. The limitations identified may point to areas where further work is needed	Pages 17-18
17	<b>Comparison with existing literature</b>	Where applicable, compare and contrast the reviews findings with the existing literature (e.g. other reviews) on the same topic	Pages 14-17
18	<b>Conclusion and recommendations</b>	List the main implications of the findings and place these in the context of other relevant literature. If appropriate, offer recommendations for policy and practice	Pages 16-17 and 18-19
19	<b>Funding</b>	Provide details of funding source (if any) for the review, the role played by the funder (if any) and any conflicts of interests of the reviewers	Page 20